

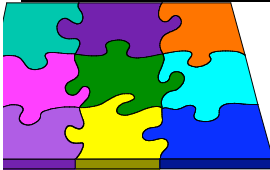
**Highlights**

- **Definition, Demographic Trends**
- **Values of Today's Workforce**
- **Keys to Managing Diversity**

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- **Legal Aspects**
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# Managing Diversity



**More and more organizations are recognizing that diversity of their employees can create a competitive advantage.**

*But, confusion exists around the concept of diversity, and the ways to capitalize on the uniqueness of different employees and bring them together into a cohesive team that benefits the business.*

*AECL is an international company, with a blend of workers from all over the world, from many different backgrounds. We must continue to attract, integrate and retain a diverse, non-traditional workforce, to maintain global competitiveness and quality and productivity.*

**Definition**

Diversity refers to the varied perspectives and approaches to work that different individuals and identity groups bring to the workplace. It is not just about race, gender, age, religion. It is about *everything* that makes us different.

**Demographic Trends**

A subset of diversity is workforce demographics. Demographics in Canada are changing with the evolution of the global economy. The following are some of the trends influencing today's workplace:

- The average age of the workforce is increasing
- By the year 2000, women will make up close to 50% of the workforce. Women with children

under 6 years of age are the fastest growing segment of the workforce.

- Between 1986 and 1991, the total estimated visible minority population in Canada had increased by 58% to approximately 10% of Canada's total population. By 2006 this is expected to be 18%.
- There is an increasing number of workers with disabilities
- The number of single-parent families has almost tripled in the last 30 years in Canada. Women represent 82% of these
- The number of dual-earner families has doubled in the last 25 years.
- aging baby-boomers will share responsibility for caring for elderly parents, as well as children. Thus the term " sandwich generation" .

**Values of Today's Workforce**

Along with increasing variance in demographics comes increasing variance in personal values and expectations in the workplace. A survey conducted in 1990 in the US, with over 500 leaders, indicated nine top values that stood out. These are listed as follows, in no specific order:



**Top nine values today:**

1. **recognition for competence and accomplishments**
2. **respect and dignity**
3. **personal choice and freedom**
4. **involvement at work**
5. **pride in one's work**
6. **lifestyle quality**
7. **financial security**
8. **self-development**
9. **health and wellness**



It is important to understand that values have proliferated. As your workforce becomes more and more diverse, so do the number and types of values held by people within it. With a wider array of values, the potential for conflict will be higher. Managers will have to learn more about what the values of their people are and how these align with those of the corporation.

**Keys to Managing Diversity**

"Managing diversity" can be broadly defined as perpetuating 'an organizational culture that values differences and maximizes the

potential of all employees'. This is clearly beneficial to any organization.

To manage and work effectively with diversity in the workplace, here are some key actions to keep in mind:

1. Respect individuality.
2. Keep an open mind.
3. Communicate assertively how you want to be treated.
4. Talk openly to look for the best solution to differences.
5. Discover how others want to be treated by asking questions.
6. Act as a force for change.
7. Insist on appropriate behaviour.
8. Take responsibility.
9. Judge by what you see people doing habitually, rather than by what you think they *might* do.
10. Focus people on the fact that if someone does a good job at work, that is what matters in the workplace, not what they do away from the workplace.

### **Bias & Preconceived Notions**

We all have preconceived ideas about the world around us, who people are, what they are capable of doing, and their reasons for doing things. Recognition of our own biases and assumptions is an important step towards accepting individual differences.

We all have deeply held internal images and assumptions that limit us to familiar ways of thinking and acting. These can be simple generalizations such as “people are untrustworthy” to complex theories about why people do things. However, they actively shape how we think and act with others. They may lead us to erroneous conclusions and hamper our ability to work effectively.

These take us into the realm of bias and prejudice. Remember - Individuals need to be treated as individuals and not lumped into

groups. A leaders’ understanding of differences will enable him/her to broaden the options, help the team, and expand their versatility in an increasingly diverse environment.

### **Legal Aspects**

Managing diversity is no longer just nice to do. In some situations it is governed by the Canadian Human Rights Act.

Discrimination is the differential treatment of an individual or group. The Canadian Human Rights Act prohibits discrimination. Individuals, line management and AECL itself can be the subject of human rights complaints that can go before the Human Rights Commission.

The Canadian Human Rights Act lists the following as prohibited grounds of discrimination:

1. race
2. national or ethnic origin
3. colour
4. religion
5. age
6. sex
7. marital status
8. family status
9. sexual orientation
10. disability, or
11. conviction for which pardon has been granted.

**Systemic discrimination** is any act or omission that results in discrimination regardless of whether the person responsible for the act or omission *intended* to discriminate. Example - not having wheelchair access to the training room.

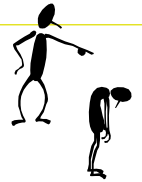
**Harassment** is a form of discrimination. It can be defined as abusive or unwelcome conduct or comments made on the basis of any individual characteristic. Workplace harassment is any conduct or comment based on one of the grounds identified above that is likely to cause offence or humiliation for an employee.

Leaders are responsible for the identification and resolution of potential harassment in their work groups. Both the leader and the organization are liable if harassment is ignored.



#### **Workplace Harassment...**

- can happen to ANYONE
- is perceived differently by different people
- most leaders and managers do not know how to address it
- it is the responsibility of the manager - NOT the employee being harassed - to recognize and deal with it



### **What Can Leaders Do?**

With regard to dealing with harassment, a leader should: contact Human Resources, document all meetings and interviews, keep all meetings confidential, follow-up to ensure resolution, insist that the harassment stops, and ensure no reprisal action occurs.

The *foundation* skill for managing diversity well is the ability to communicate - both speaking *and* listening. Being able to recognize your own needs and express them will help you to empathize with the needs of others and set an example for them to follow.

Work to create an environment that values individual differences. Act as a role model, treat others with respect, be flexible, accept and help employees accept the unique traits of others.

*For more information, contact Organization Development and Training at your site.*